REMARKS

Claims 1-25 remain pending with claims 1, 17, and 18 being independent. Applicants' have amended claims 7 and 13 (on page 4 of this amendment). Applicants submit new claims 29-43 for consideration with claims 29 and 39 being independent.

Claim 1 recites a method that includes "specifying a thread from among a plurality of processing threads to process data" ... "from one of a plurality of device ports". As an example of an application of this subject matter, the description includes an illustrative discussion of the independently operating threads of a network processor that process data received over different ports.

The Examiner rejected claim 1 as being obvious in view of Allison (U.S. 6,373,848) stating:

> "Allison does not explicitly state specifying a thread from among a plurality of processing program threads to process the data. However, Allison teaches specifying instructions from a plurality of instructions to process the data. One of ordinary skill in the art should recognize that a program is construction of plurality of instructions which are organized or grouped into subroutines or threads in accordance with their functions such as interrupt subroutine, word processing subroutine or I/O subroutine." (page 2, office action mailed 03/28/03).

The statement above, however, seems to equate a "thread" with any set of program instructions. The examiner should be the plain meaning to the term thread as used by Applicant. In particular, the specification describes different threads as having different execution contexts. For instance, the specification describes different threads of instructions as having different program counters. Applicants agree that many different subroutines or functions may be used when programming. However, though a set of instructions may include many different subroutines or functions, these programming choices are immaterial as to whether these routines are executed in a thread's flow of execution.

Additionally, the Examiner states that Allison does not specify the use of threads. However, the Examiner offers no motivation justifying a modification of Allison to feature a

Applicant : Wolrich, et. al.
Serial No. : 09/475,614
Filed : December 30, 1999
Page : 10

Attorneys Docket No.: 10559-137001
Intel Docket No.: P7876

multi-threaded design. Thus, Applicants request withdrawal of the §103 rejection of claim 1 and its dependent claims. For similar reasons, Applicants also request withdrawal of the §103 rejection of claims 17, 18 and their dependent claims.
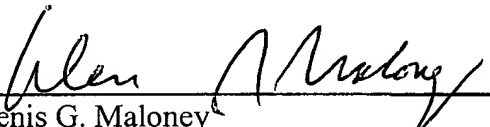
Dependent claim 13 recites a method that includes "determining which among the plurality of program threads is available" and "assigning an available program thread." For example, some threads may be busy performing other tasks and may be unavailable to process the data at a given point in time.

The Examiner did not identify any portion of Allison describing thread availability nor identify any motivation for modifying Allison to do so. As described above, Allison does not describe using threads much less determining which are available. Thus, Applicants request withdrawal of the §103 rejection of claim 13.

Enclosed is a check for $388.00 for excess claim fees, and a check for $110.00 for a one month extension of time. Please apply any other charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

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